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second-hand account of the Ngoni, and some relevant information is given by Soga (1930).

Good accounts of pre-conquest social life are not so numerous. The most useful accounts are those of Wiese (1891 and 1900), Angus (1899), and Deare (1928), based on observations in the years immediately prior to the war of 1898. For the Ngoni of northern Nyasaland there are the works of Elmslie (1899) and Fraser (1901 and 1914). Read, in 1935, was the first to apply modern methods of inquiry and has published comparative material on the Ngoni of northern Nyasaland, Fort Jameson and southern Nyasaland, and on the neighbouring Cewa.

Some of this literature has found its way back to the Ngoni themselves, and children nowadays acquire their knowledge of the exploits of their ancestors as much from school books as from oral tradition. Under these circumstances, I decided that no useful purpose would be served by my trying to make conventional inquiries into tribal history with the aim of establishing what had in fact occurred in the past. I found it was impossible to tell whether similarity between an informant's account of a past event and a previously published version was due to common origin, independent invention, or good teaching in school. I was however concerned with the quite different problem of what use the Ngoni made of their history,[4] and I collected the histories of many counties, villages and people. For the material in this chapter I have therefore relied on the fullest and most lucid of these many versions of Ngoni history, that by Chibambo, an Ngoni of northern Nyasaland, supplemented by the writings of Poole, a member of the Administration at Fort Jameson for many years, and Lancaster, who was a game warden in the area.

2. *The Nguni background*

Before we can understand the Ngoni of central Africa we must first consider social conditions farther south, for it was from the south that many Ngoni came. From the sixteenth century onwards, south-eastern Africa was peopled by subsistence cultivators growing cereals and herding cattle. The Nguni, as the southernmost branch of these peoples is now called, occupied the area which has become Swaziland, Natal and the Transkei. At first the Nguni were not organized into powerful states but from the common background of Nguni society there developed, from the last quarter of the eighteenth century onwards, several strong political units. We may mention among others the Zulu empire under Shaka, the Swazi

[4] See my 'History in a changing society'.

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divination are not well developed among the Ngoni as means of influencing action. The attempt to establish a new county failed for lack of Administrative support. Chiefs still continue to express their rivalries through sorcery, and would-be chiefs still attempt to establish new counties.

When Mpezeni II died, his heir was still young and was out of the country at boarding-school. A minor chief, after quarrelling with one of the dead chief's lieutenants about the funeral arrangements, proposed that the heir should remain at school to finish his education and that meanwhile there should be a regency. However the Administration arranged for the immediate return of the heir.

The rivalry between the Paramount Chief and his minor chiefs shows itself in other less dramatic ways. Thus the Paramount Chief's advisers told me that all cases coming on appeal from the courts of minor chiefs were heard in the Paramount Chief's own court of first instance, and that only if the verdict given there was not accepted was the case referred to the Appeal Court which was held at the administrative centre of the Paramount Chief's county every month. The minor chief's and their advisers told me that cases sent on appeal from them went direct to the Native Appeal Court, and emphasized that this court was composed of several minor chiefs and their councillors, called upon in rotation. In practice, as I observed in the course of my work, sometimes one procedure was followed, sometimes the other.

On the other hand, the minor chiefs and other politically important people support the Paramount Chief in his relations with the Administration. When recently Ngoni thought that the Administration was not treating the Paramount Chief with the respect due to his position, two minor chiefs endeavoured to organize a petition to the Administration on the matter. When the Paramount Chief's deputy was put in prison by the Administration for embezzlement, it was a minor chief who protested most strongly to the Administration. However dissatisfied the minor chiefs and people may be with any particular Paramount Chief, there is little dissatisfaction with the Paramount Chieftainship. This is still the feature of their organization which in Ngoni eyes most clearly marks them off from their neighbours, and which most clearly links them in their present lowly condition to the exploits of their illustrious forefathers.

3. *The chief's advisers*

The men who advise the chief, who enjoy his confidence and his hospitality, belong to a number of different categories. In each

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between political and judicial actions is not surprising. There is a connexion of this kind in every society, and the connexion is a particularly close one in societies like the Ngoni, where the same individuals act as legislators, administrators, and judges, and where the court does not confine itself merely to the legal issues in a dispute but examines the whole network of social relationships which are involved, with the object of restoring social order.

There are three ways in which this connexion can be seen. First, the court may be used as a vehicle for implementing the policy of the Native Authority. Secondly, the Administration may use the court to implement its policy. Thirdly, positions in the court may be used to satisfy men who seek political authority. We have to deal with the third point in our discussion of the development of the Native Authority.

A chief anxious to gain favour with the Administration sees that his court enforces with heavy penalties the various regulations with which, for the time being, the Administration is concerned, such as those relating to agricultural control, and school attendance. A chief who does not wish to co-operate will neglect these regulations. Thus a few years ago there was a regulation that once a child had begun a two-year course at school, he or she must stay to finish it. In one county this rule was enforced much as the letter of the law indicated, in another it was completely ignored despite the protests of school-teachers, and in a third it was interpreted to mean that every child must go to school. About a year later the Administration decided that as promulgated the rule was *ultra vires*, and said it must be withdrawn. Nevertheless in some counties it is still enforced. These chiefs and courts are not being merely capricious. Some chiefs support the missions and their schools, others oppose them; some are in alliance with the school-teachers and other intelligentsia in their counties, others oppose them. These various attitudes and alignments are reflected in the way in which they respond to a new law. This is particularly noticeable when public delicts, such as absence from school, are concerned, for in general the court is its own law-enforcing agency. There is no independent police force to bring offenders to court whether or not the court wants to see them, but only the assessors, court clerk, messengers and others who, when they are not busy about their own affairs, may if they are so inclined wander through the villages looking for unlicensed dogs and unlicensed beer. Thus the enforcement of law relating to public delicts depends largely on the relationship between the Native Authority and the common people.

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a few weeks. They were both dominated by important Ngoni families, and both the headquarters of subordinate chiefs. They both represented that blend of old and new in Ngoni life which was continually keeping the anthropologist on her toes.

Enkodlweni was far from main roads and centres of modern life. When I first went there my lorry cut a swathe of grass knee-high on the so-called road to the village, and the radiator, choked with grass seed, boiled all the time. I lived in the mud-and-wattle hut maintained by the chief for visiting teachers and missionaries opposite the school, a four-standard school under an able young headmaster, well educated and well trained. He and his schoolboys, the resident evangelist and the court clerk represented the new elements in village life. Yet they were not cut off from the Ngoni way of life—on the contrary they were very much part of it and very proud of being Ngoni. The school had been taught in the Ngoni language, akin to old Zulu, until a few years before my visit, and the children were still given Ngoni proverbs to write in their copy-books. Several of the older people had books in their huts written in Zulu as well as in English, and Ngoni was still spoken as the home language in many of the households. The older women knew the traditional special vocabulary used by women only, and dressed their hair in the high chignon style. Proverbs were quoted often in the court and in church; stories of war against the Bemba people in Northern Rhodesia forty years ago were told by the kraal gate as if they happened last year. Several leading Ngoni clans were represented in the village, and each had their own praise songs and forms of addressing their ancestors.

The old evangelist, himself a member of a famous clan, had been threatened, thirty years before, with death by the former chief if he continued to teach and preach. He stayed, notwithstanding, and had become one of the trusted counsellors of the present chief. During the day he joined the

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FAMILY LIFE FOR THE YOUNG CHILD

It was the fathers who decided at what age a child should go to school, and having once enrolled the boy or girl and paid the fees, the fathers insisted on regular attendance. 593 [872]

All Ngoni fathers showed affection for their young children, some consistently and others when it occurred to them. They picked them up and carried them about, held their hand while they tried their first steps, listened to their attempts to speak correctly, held them in their arms when they sat on the veranda. In one village twin boys aged four were devoted to their father and he to them. When he walked about, he held a hand of each. When he sat on the veranda they were always beside him and he had an arm round each. When he was elsewhere, the twins wandered about the compound disconsolately, hand in hand, rejecting the advances of their nurse girls and uncertain what to do until he appeared again.

Ngoni fathers had to be consulted in cases of sickness when the grandmother's remedies had failed and specialist help was needed. Then the father and his brothers and their father decided whether to summon a diviner or a herbalist, and arranged for the throwing of lots or the search for 'medicines', and paid the agreed fee when the cure worked. 593 757

It was part of Ngoni tradition to keep the knowledge of death away from young children. The father was held responsible for seeing that his children were kept away from the hut where the corpse was awaiting burial, and from the funeral itself. When men and women of leading Ngoni families were buried at the edge of the kraal, and the fence enlarged so that the cattle stamped over the grave, the explanation given (though it was not the only reason) was that 'the young children should not know or fear death in this village'. 593 764 858

The physical surroundings of the small child

The two diagrams, overleaf, illustrate the layout of the hut and compound in typical Ngoni households. Some of these 342 351

VILLAGE LIFE FOR OLDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS

The youngest boys were not expected to herd cattle until they were ten or eleven years old. Their work was to look after the calves, sheep and goats, sometimes following the cattle to the grazing ground, sometimes wandering round the edge of the village, avoiding the cultivated areas until after harvest. At that time cattle, calves, sheep and goats were driven into the stubble and left to forage.

As a result of dormitory life, combined with cattle-herding, a definite ideal herd-boy personality developed. This was fostered by the hero-worship of the older herd-boys by the young ones. It was also built up by the praise or blame meted out for herding well or badly by the older herd-boys to younger ones, and by the cattle-owners. This 'ideal herdsman' was used by Ngoni ministers and teachers living in the villages to relate their teaching about Christianity to the life around them. Prayers near the kraal, conducted by an Ngoni minister each evening, or before people went on a journey, often began with the words 'Jesus our shepherd, keep us well'. Young teachers often said to me how they always listened as boys when a prayer began like this, and that in school their favourite Bible story was that of David the herd-boy.

When there was a school in the village or near by which the Ngoni elders approved of, the herd-boys had a busy life. They watered the cattle very early, took them to graze and milked them. Then they went to school from ten to two, taking the cattle out grazing afterwards. In the cold weather they went to school from six to ten and herded cattle the rest of the day, after the sun had dried the dew off the grass. School attendance depended on the attitude of fathers to the new learning, and how the village elders regarded the local mission and its teachers. The boys whose fathers had no cattle, in general the non-Ngoni elements in the village, were free to attend school continuously since they had no herding responsibilities. There was some jeering among the boys in the dormitory at those who only went to school and did not

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872 go herding. School was sometimes regarded as an easy option where you sat still all day and repeated things after the teacher. This was far from being the case in a village like [875] Enkodlweni where the headmaster was well trained and kept the boys on their toes. In such schools the boys themselves were enthusiastic about learning, and regarded going to school as a dignified and worth-while occupation, and not a childish amusement.

Girls' life in the village

858 When the girls had their second teeth and were acknowledged to have reached the new stage in their development, there was no abrupt transition for them, as for their brothers, from the household circle to the dormitory, or from the women's world to the men's world. They continued as part of the women's world; they changed their occupations and their daily routine on the whole very little; and they went on sleeping in the hut of a widowed aunt or grandmother. All that was said however in the earlier part of the chapter about accountability for their behaviour was as true as for the boys.

561 The Ngoni girls of leading families formed a distinct group, called in the age-set terms 'children' until they were about [565] eleven and then 'immature girls' until they reached puberty. There was in Ngoni thought and practice a clear division between immature and mature girls, and we shall see what this involved in girls' life in Chapters VI and VII. The age-set terms used to distinguish between children and immature girls did not imply any real differences in ways of living, manners and occupations. The girls between about seven and fourteen were looked on as belonging to a 'girls' circle', and this girls' circle had certain distinctive features.

561 In the first place the tendency of the girls to draw apart
562 from the boys of their own age, already evident before the
535 coming of the second teeth, was now more or less complete
628 with the boys' withdrawal into dormitory life and their preoccupation with herding. Later, about the age of twelve

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upbringing, they would be unwilling to consider an alliance if the girl's mother were known to be a doubtful character or a careless housewife. The girl's prospects in marriage depended not only on her own reputation and character, but on the household milieu in which she was known to have grown up.

The Ngoni girls in this circle were not only an exclusive group. They were a carefully guarded and protected one. The surveillance of the grandmother, as the woman head of the girl's father's house, was dominant. Besides watching to see if the girl's home was proving a satisfactory training ground, she chose a 'companion' or 'attendant' for the girl, to take the place of the nurse girl. She was a little older than the Ngoni girl, but near enough in age to enjoy and enter into all her occupations and amusements. This companion, chosen from among the helpers in the grandmother's household, grew up with the Ngoni girl, waited on her to some extent, went everywhere with her, slept in the same hut and ate in the same household.

In her daily life in the village an Ngoni girl had in her circle all those whom she called 'sisters' and their companions. There was one exception to the exclusiveness of this group, and that was the school. Many Ngoni fathers who decided that school was a good thing for their boys, decided that it would also be wise to send their girls to school, especially if they showed signs of exceptional ability and leadership. This was sometimes carried through in the teeth of opposition from the grandmother, but the father usually won the day. For Ngoni girls school was an escape from the relative dullness and monotony of compound life, as also from the continual surveillance which became stricter as they grew older and entered the immature girls' group. The Ngoni girls enjoyed mixing with boys, being taught by men, learning to read and write, hearing Bible stories. The daughters of Ngoni chiefs and heads of leading clans were easily distinguishable in the schools by their controlled and dignified behaviour in class and in the playground. They were not

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given to giggling and putting their head on one side when asked questions. They took their school work seriously in order to show that they, the Ngoni girls, were the intelligent ones. They were also aware that the number of cattle to be transferred at their marriage would be greater according to whether they finished school in Standard II, III, IV, or even VI.

Apart from going to school, which was only for the daughters of relatively forward-looking Ngoni fathers, the girls continued to take part in the daily routine of the household. They and their companions, according to their growth and strength and pleasure, did a little pounding, fetching water, grinding grain, roasting ground-nuts. In a large household, where there were many helpers, the daughters of the family only did as much as they felt inclined of the domestic chores. As they said: 'It was like our play.' They spent more time with the young children, or washing themselves and their clothes by the stream. Combing and dressing their hair, rubbing fat or oil on their skin, threading beads, plaiting grass or fibres, learning how to make Ngoni bead designs for head bands or wristlets—all these formed the lighter and more amusing side of the daily routine.

From among the girls in this exclusive and protected girls' circle, Ngoni girls chose a particular friend, whom they always addressed as 'my friend', even if she were a classificatory sister or cousin. As with the boys in the dormitory this friend was a confidante to whom a girl could talk freely about her life in the compound, her likes and dislikes among the other girls and women, her ideas about suitors and marriage. The friend was always from another compound and of a leading Ngoni clan. The two friends made bracelets and necklets for each other, and went to bathe in the stream together. Sometimes the friendship lasted until the girls were married and separated. At times it broke up suddenly in a violent quarrel. There was however a curious tenacity about these friendship pacts, and they were more often maintained

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797 Central Africa. The U.M.C.A. subsequently concentrated its activi-
795 ties in another part of the District, so that the two main denominations are now the Dutch Reformed Church and the Catholic Church. There was for a time a branch of the Livingstonia Mission (Free Church of Scotland) in the area, while more recently a Seventh Day Adventist Mission has begun work. Since 1924 there have been some adherents to the Watch Tower[1] amongst the Ngoni, but this movement did not become important until some years later.

797 Primary education is carried on in mission schools subsidized by
872 the Administration, but there is also a Native Authority school over which the chiefs exercise some influence and which is to some extent supported by Native Treasury funds. The teachers in the elementary
[875] schools live in the villages, but they do not exercise very much influence outside their classrooms. This does not appear to have been the case in the past, when there was greater hostility between the different missions and when the missions tended to disregard the tribal authorities. The teachers then seem to have set themselves up as headmen on their own, and schools were built without the permission of the local headmen. In many cases where the issue between the missions was undecided, there were two schools in the same village. In the middle 'thirties many of these so-called schools were closed on the initiative of the Administration and the teachers who remain are now more interested in education than in politics.

872 A village school serves more than one village, so that the children of a neighbourhood containing, say, half a dozen villages get to know each other and visit in each other's villages. Certain dances and songs,
[595] known as *konsert*, are performed by parties of schoolchildren going from
[533] one village to another, and this leads to similar inter-village dancing in the evenings organized by groups of boys. At the end of term a number of schools of the same denomination combine to perform a rather more elaborate programme of songs and dances, and these displays are attended by many adults.

797 The deacons and evangelists are of greater importance in the
794 political life of the tribe than are the school teachers. Deacons take a certain initiative in settling disputes in the village, and they report to their missions deaths and serious sins that affect their people. They arrange for religious instruction for catechumens and may on occasion organize opposition to some practice that has been declared wrong by
797 the mission. Evangelists are responsible for a number of villages and

[1] The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.